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Contents.

	PAGE
Notes of the Month	1
A Thought for the Month—"Faith and the Future"	3
A New Year's Message. By Rev. G. J. Slipper	3
Stopford Brooke—Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke	5
Going Forth. By Dora Mellone ..	7
Saving Human Life. By Dr. John Campbell	9
Lesson Notes for Teachers ..	10
Poems: National and International. By G. F. Savage-Armstrong. Review	13
Report	14

Notes of the Month.

At the opening of another year we would extend to all our readers, past and present, the heartiest of greetings and good wishes. We cannot ignore the fact that all the signs would seem to prognosticate a period of increased strain and stress at home and abroad. The further need of strict economy in the matter of food, together with the enhanced prices of the most necessary articles, will make living both difficult and dear. We sincerely hope, however, that careful voluntary rationing will make compulsory measures unnecessary. Yet when we reflect that such economy is not only essential for domestic reasons, but is also imperative for the sake of those who are engaged in the war, we can resolutely and uncomplainingly accept the conditions. We all desire the successful termination of the war, and it is our fervent hope and prayer that in this new year it may be realised. But even if it is, the need of rigid carefulness and unshrinking self-sacrifice will still exist. Let us determine that so far as in us lies that need will be cheerfully met. In the meantime our thoughts constantly turn to the members of our congregations who are so bravely battling for our liberties. They are scattered far and wide, on land and sea. Our first Christmas greeting reached us from distant Mesopotamia. One Belfast young man, connected by family ties with our community, writes brightly and interestingly from Palestine. Another recalls in Italy his earlier associations with our churches and Sunday Schools. But wherever our young men happen to be, we reciprocate their kindly thought of us and their friends at home, and trust that in the coming days the God of their fathers will be their Rock of Defence and effectual support.

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In response to a request from the Editor of the "Belfast Evening Telegraph," the Moderator of our Non-Subscribing Church (Rev. J. H. Bibby, of Ballee), sent a message for insertion in the Christmas Eve issue of that paper. A copy of the message has been forwarded to us in the belief that it may be of interest to our readers. For that reason we gladly find a place for it, although we deem it necessary to point out, as the message itself is careful to state, that it represents the individual point of view of the writer, and is not to be taken in its entirety as representing the views of the Editorial Board.

"I am grateful to be able to say that

the group of churches over which I have been called to preside is wholeheartedly with those who look upon this war as a clean fight for the 'right to be righteously free.' I do not waste words in the usual conventional Xmas expressions about peace and good-will among men, for I feel too bitterly how much it would be out of place to do so. At the present time such talk is perilously like cant. Indeed I wish all our public men could be put under a self-denying ordinance of silence till things are brighter, when peace expressions would be timely and gracious. I would, however, use the opening you give me—and in this I speak for myself—to urge a firm policy of reprisals. If I could have my way I would send out with every ship leaving our ports a draft of German prisoners, whose lives should be equally jeopardised with the lives of our own seamen. The conduct of such a measure would be a small matter of discipline. This course was taken by the French when the Germans attacked the hospital ships of the Allies, and for a time at least the Germans left off their lawless and brutal practices. Let more of this be done. When the British Government, early in 1917, threatened reprisals, and forgot to act, this country was stultified, and the Government's much speaking did infinite harm. If fighting must be, then let the British cast off their kid gloves, and go for the Germans tooth and claw. It seems to me that that is the only kind of warfare they understand. Fair words would be useless.

Millenarianism does not appeal to me at all; and in this again I suppose I am unconventional. But at any rate I am honest to say so. I should rejoice to see the Jews enjoying their own again, but more rejoiced to see any people freed, once for all, from the heel of the unspeakable Turk. The capture of Jerusalem will profoundly move our fellow subjects in the East, and we do well to 'rejoice with them that do rejoice.'"

* *

In recent days there have appeared several outstanding books which make particular appeal to thoughtful Irish readers. One is entitled "A Frenchman's Walk Through Ireland, 1796–7," and is not only very readable in itself, but has the further commendation of being locally produced. The editor and translator is Mr. John Stevenson, of Belfast, and the printing of the volume has been most capably done by the firm of M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr. As recording the impressions of an open-eyed, observant foreigner passing through Ireland at a most critical period of its history, it will be of interest to many persons. "The Life and Letters of Stopford Brook" is dealt with in another part of the magazine, and hence we only mention it here as a singularly interesting and well-written biographical work. Another publication which is being widely read, and not least by inhabitants of this country, where for some years the author was Chief Secretary, is Viscount Morley's "Recollections." But apart from the light it throws upon the interesting past, it impresses us greatly as the revelation of a rich and cultured mind familiar with the world's best literature, and finding mental sustenance and solace therein, even in times of the greatest political unrest. The editor of the "Fortnightly Review," and of the English Men of Letters series of biographies, finds fitting place amid the many interesting recollections recorded, and one is, perhaps, inclined to reflect upon the national exigencies which made it necessary for so ripe and resourceful a scholar to become immersed in the cares and responsibilities of political life.

* *

We would earnestly appeal to the local treasurers of the Orphan Society to make a point of collecting their subscriptions and handing them in to the hon. treasurer before the end of March. Last year the official auditor strongly criticised the practice of exceeding the time limit, and declared his intention of excluding from the year's accounts any subscriptions received later than March 31st. We hope, therefore, that his intimation will be carefully noted, and that both subscriptions and lists of subscribers may be all to hand within

the time specified. The treasurer is Mr. A. Kennedy Stewart, and his address is 49 Donegall Place, Belfast. The lists of subscribers should be sent to the Secretary, Rev. A. Turner, Templepatrick.

A Thought for the Month

"FAITH AND THE FUTURE."

"And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the Lord."
—Ps. xl. 3.

"What will God do this year? How will He come near to man? It may be, oh, that it might be! that He will break up this awful sluggishness of Christendom, this terrible torpidity of the Christian Church, and give us a great, true revival of religion. It may be that He will speak some great imperious command to the brutal and terrible spirit of war, and will open the gate upon a bright period of peace throughout the world! It may be that He will draw back the curtain and throw some of His light upon the question of how the poor and rich may live together in more cordial brotherhood. It may be that He will lead up from the depths of their common faith a power of unity into the sects of the divided Christendom. Perhaps He will smite this selfishness of fashionable life, and make it earnest. Perhaps by some terrible catastrophe He will teach the nation that corruption is ruin, and that nothing but integrity can make any nation strong. Perhaps this! perhaps that! We make our guesses, and no man can truly say. Only we know that with a world that needs so much, and with a God who knows its needs, and who loves it and pities it so tenderly, there must be in the long year some approach of His life to its life, some coming of the Lord."—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

"All good ends can be worked out by good means. Those that cannot are bad, and may be counted so at once and left alone."

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE.

BY REV. G. J. SLIPPER.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that hath no might, He increaseth strength."
—ISAIAH xl. 1 and 29.

Another year has dawned amid the clash and strife of a world at war, and we pause at its threshold to find a word of courage and cheer to help us along the journey of the days that lie before us.

The shadow of the war hangs as a pall over the whole world. No experience of storm and struggle and sorrow has been more intense than that through which our vast Empire has passed. We have certainly made history, but the record is not yet finished. We await the issue as we look forward into this New Year, but it is not without hope, even though the faith of some may be shaken.

Were we not assured that the cause for which we contend is a just one; were we not convinced that it is a righteous one, we might well despair. But because we do believe in the cause for which our Empire has put forth all its strength, and for which so many of her brave sons have made the supreme sacrifice, we can turn our hearts to God—

"Our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come."

2. Now it is of great advantage to us, that for all the experiences through which we are passing, we have, in the Scriptures, as an inspiration to our faith, the revelation of the Divine Providence manifested under circumstances not less perplexing, and certainly not less difficult than our own.

As it has been finely said:—"Amid the long drawn tragedy of human affairs, the Bible shows us that wisdom, which is from everlasting to everlasting, strongly and sweetly disposing all things."

Wherever we look in the records of Israel's chequered history, we find some incident that bears a close analogy to the experiences through which our Empire is passing, and the most notable fact in that history is, that we invariably

find the counsel of trust, or the exhortation to be of good courage; to be resolute and undismayed in the assurance that God is ever with His people, whose cause is just, and whose hearts are stayed upon Him.

And this surely is our hope as we front the issues which, at the beginning of another year, portend victory to our arms. May God speed the day that witnesses the advent of peace with honour, when might shall surrender its presumptions to right, and when those who lifted up the sword of world conquest shall be humbled through the failure of their own selfish ambitions, as well as be held accountable for all the sorrow and all the sacrifice and all the bitterness which their lust for power has created.

3. What message, then, in the face of the experiences of this present time, shall we gather from Scripture to provide counsel and comfort to our hearts?

I do not think there is any that is more fitting in its purpose, or more pregnant with meaning, than is found in the passages which form our text:—

"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." "He who giveth power to the faint, and to them that hath no might, increaseth strength."

These verses strike the full note of the message which the whole chapter proclaims—a chapter that has been defined as "an epic of the unwearied God, and the fainting strength of man."

Certainly for splendour of imagery, and for inspiration, it is one of the most eloquent in literature. It emphasises not only the unchangeableness of the Divine power and Providence, but it brings us, as it were, face to face with God. Its message inspires an ever-deepening faith and trust.

Dr. Hillis, in an interesting exposition, tells us that "like all the supreme things in eloquence, this chapter is a spark struck out of the fires of war and persecution."

In its message lies the rally call of a patriot prophet who rejoices in the return of his compatriots from their long exile and captivity, into which, mainly by their own actions, they had been plunged.

We cannot, even after the long interval of years, read the story of the return of those exiles without feeling the deep pathos which surrounds it.

It was a piteous spectacle—the spectacle of a people broken in health, utterly despondent and miserable, as they gathered on the outskirts of the desert across which they must travel ere they reached their long deserted homeland.

And in that hour, beholding those exiles and captives in their misery, a flood of emotion surged in the prophet's breast. He saw those bound who should have conquered; he saw men as slaves who should have been kings.

But with the emotion came also a passionate longing which fired his soul with a rallying power. His desire was that he might rouse his people from the torpor of despair. Thus, in the fulness of his sympathy, he spoke to them the message laden with comfort and hope—the message that reveals the power of God towards His people.

"What if the night winds did go moaning through the deserted streets of their capital! What if they had felt the goad and misery of oppression and captivity! What if they had suffered defeat and loss, and had been scattered!

"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." There was the answer for all those experiences.

And though the journey across the desert seemed long and wearisome, even for that there was an inspiration also:—"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." That was the promise set before them.

So throughout the chapter the message proclaims the Omnipotence and the incomparableness of God. He who measureth the waters in the hollow of His hand; who weigheth the mountains with scales, and the hills in a balance; who looketh upon all the nations of the earth as a very little thing, and who hath power to subdue the enemies that oppress.

"Hast thou not known; hast thou not heard?" the prophet asks, "that the everlasting God the Lord, the

Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary ? " Could it be possible that the sons of the fathers were ignorant of the great Sustainer, who giveth power to the faint, and strength to them that hath no might ?

Even though the youths might faint and be weary, yet was the promise sure that " they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

4. It is an eloquent, inspiring testimony—the testimony of how the unwearied, gracious God comforteth and sustaineth the fainting weakness of man.

And this is a message—a promise which we of to-day need to realise and accept. True, it does not apply to us in just the same way as it did to those of old time, but yet there are points of analogy which make the message opportune and acceptable For the many experiences of our daily lives we need the same assurance as was given to them, and we need it in a very personal way.

We have already spoken of the world's travail under which our nation groans, and the influence of which we all feel. The message gives us hope and heart to look up. But there are other aspects of life wherein it applies with equal power and inspiration.

Isaiah, you remember, was thinking of men whose hopes were broken, and whose lives were baffled and beaten.

How many there are who have experienced the truth of this ? Believe me, my friends, it is not an isolated experience.

How many there are to whom those words of Apostle Paul recall the vivid memory of bygone days and years ? " I find a law in my members, warring against the law in my soul. When I would do good, evil is present with me ! "

But for such experiences comes the glorious song of hope for those who will accept it—the song that has a power within it, which bids men " rise on the stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things "—" Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God"; your warfare is accomplished, your iniquity is pardoned ; and out of His love the Lord will give unto thee double for all thy sins that are forgiven. Through the trials, the weaknesses, the failures, with all that they have brought to thee —weariness and vexation of spirit, even to those exiles of old, may we find the sweetness of salvation.

" He who fainteth not, neither is weary," is ever ready to reveal to us His unsuspected Divine purposes, if only we are willing to look up and press forward.

And we may read into this message a song of joy that dispels all the gloom and fear of our hearts. The ground of optimism is always in God. It is only those who are living without God who are without hope. As it is said : — " Between no God anywhere and the one God who is everywhere, there is no middle ground. Either we are children, buffetted by fate and circumstances, with events tossing souls about in an eternal game of battledore and shuttlecock, or else the world is our Father's house, and God standeth within the shadow, keeping watch over His own. For the man who believes in God, and allies himself with all that is noble, and true, and of good report, seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, there can be no real defeat nor death nor despair."

All God's good men in the past generations, and no less in the present, bear witness to this truth. Within their hearts lies some hidden energy ; within their souls some hidden light. Let such be our blessed experience, for thus shall we be inspired to press forward undeterred and onward, with new courage and hope, conscious that in all things, and for all the burdens, the power of God is sufficient to enable us to endure, and prove ourselves faithful. What greater incentive do we desire than this for our upward march ? Let us walk closer to God, even as did Jesus Christ our Lord, and so place ourselves, if He chooseth to use us, as instruments of His divine will, that through us He may accomplish some part of His eternal purpose.

Let us cultivate the spirit of an earnest, Christian fidelity, and put forth a true endeavour, that shall help us to realise in the fulness of our faith the glorious message of comfort, and the gracious promise of strength, which ever inspireth a true hope in our hearts, that bids us look up and look on.

Thus shall we learn to interpret the meanings of that hope in terms, which a poet has expressed as follows:—

"God rules our years,
Our days at times in strange forbidding paths have seemed to lead,
We realize the turn, but cannot see the end:
The path, if straight, might go on to towering difficulties that would the heart appal,
The winding path that puzzles us
Is wisest after all.

"God rules our years,
The things we wanted, prayed for, suffered when we did not get,
Seemed wisest, best—the only end to seek;
Let God withhold it, and we could not understand,
Blindly we staggered on, and gaining strength we came to know
God all the time had held our hand.

"Yes! God rules our years,
The present seems unrest;
And what's before us looks at distance hard to bear;
For time has told our hearts to be not sad,
For years are made of heart throbs. God's temple is the soul,
And we are glad."

Whatever betide us in the coming days, let us work in trust, let us look on with hope, and let our atmosphere be happiness.

If troubles come, let them be the dark background that shall serve to throw our abiding faith into bolder relief—the faith that the "Eternal God fainteth not, neither is weary; and He giveth power to the faint, and to them that hath no might increaseth strength."

STOPFORD BROOKE.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF STOPFORD BROOKE.

By Lawrence Pearsall Jacks, M.A., Hon. LL.D., D.D., Principal of Manchester College, Oxford. Two vols. (John Murray. 15/- net.)

It is a long time since we received so much pleasure from the reading of a biographical work as that afforded by the two volumes of "The Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke." The province of such a work is to reveal a personality, and to do it as far as possible without the services of showman or interpreter. We may, then, without other help perceive why such a personality appealed, and wherein consisted the nature of his charm and the character of his impression, both upon his contemporaries and upon ourselves. Judged by such a test, Dr. Jacks's task has been triumphantly discharged. By means of many extracts from the diaries and letters of Stopford Brooke, he allows the latter to speak and to act for himself. We see the subject in his happy home life and upbringing near Letterkenny and at Kingstown. We receive the most vivid and delightful glimpses of his relations with his parents, his tramps and genial comradeship with his brothers, his early attraction to natural beauty, and his whole-hearted and loyal abandonment to her service. The quest of natural beauty is seen to be compatible with that of religion—beauty and truth meet and mingle their rites and exercise their dual ministry in a life which both enrich and both make blessed. So clearly portrayed is the young curate in his London life that we read of his later secession from the Anglican Church with a sense of the inevitable which it implies. Given such a character, such an attitude to veracity, that conclusion must sooner or later be reached. Most illuminating is such an incident as this, recorded for us by Stopford Brooke himself. He felt his position in the Church of England was becoming untenable, and made that clear to Dean Stanley. The letter said, in effect:—"The Church is broadening to meet your position." Brooke answered, "Will it broaden sufficently to admit of James Martineau being made Archbishop of Canterbury?" "Not in our time," said Stanley. "Then I leave the Church of England," said Brooke. But other pre-disposing reasons are also made plain. First, he from the beginning of his Anglican ministry strongly

dissented from the doctrine of Eternal Punishment, and openly said so. Secondly, "he had abandoned the particular doctrine of the Incarnation on which the Church of England is founded, holding it in a universal form which could not be accommodated with what he had subscribed." And because "he required a broad basis of plain rectitude, veracity, and common sense," he promptly seceded, and his conscience ever justified his action. But having done so, he joined no other body. Dr. Jacks makes it perfectly clear that it is a misunderstanding of his position to say that he joined the Unitarian body. What really happened was this: Finding the same appreciation of veracity and the same emphatic love of liberty amongst those who called themselves Unitarians, he could cordially co-operate with them. Thus it was that in the year 1897 and 1898 he undertook, by arrangement with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, the holding of special services in the principal towns of the United Kingdom, and at that time visited several of our churches in the North of Ireland. In that capacity he always drew large and comprehensive congregations, many so-called "orthodox" finding in him a strong and uplifting leader and friend. Nor was his appeal as preacher greater than his appeal as literary guide. For many years, both in London and in the provinces, his leatures on the great English poets marked him out as an attractive and trustworthy interpreter of the best literature. His published lectures made for him a still wider constituency of grateful admirers. How well fitted he was to bring his rich resources of literary knowledge to bear upon his pulpit tasks is seen in his "Theology in the English Poets," a series of lectures which, on their delivery in St. James's Chapel in 1872, proved him a pioneer in the art of relating literature to the life of the spirit. That is seen to be one of his most striking traits, *i.e.*, not to regard any specific aspect of human life as religious, but rather to see life from a religious point of view, and to roam freely through the provinces of art, and literature, and society in the one devoted quest for the things that are most excellent. Yet how swiftly and gracefully he can doff the role of instructor, and appear as the friend of the child, his letters to his own children felicitously show. Such epistles are not the least fascinating part of his biography. Nor would we overlook the letters to his brothers and friends, called forth on his frequent visits to the Continent, by the contemplation of some beautiful scene. All that we have said, and much that lack of space compels us to leave unsaid, will indicate the varied influences that enriched his life, determined his pursuits. To some of us it was permitted to see the splendid physical embodiment of his varied gifts of mind and heart. The biography assists others to that end by giving photographs of Stopford Brooke at different periods of his life. One enables us to see him towards the end of his long and richly-endowed life. Then, as in his earlier days, he lives in contact with the Nature he has so ardently loved, and in whose ministry he has so unselfishly served. He had deserved well of his fellows—how well his skilful and sympathetic biographer enables us to see. We are grateful to Dr. Jacks for so faithful and fascinating an account of a most lovable personality.

H. J. R.

GOING FORTH.

Last November a great soul went forth to meet her Master. Dr. Elsie Inglis, founder of the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service, lay dying in the hospital in Newcastle-on-Tyne. A November gale raged outside, driving ships from their anchorage in the harbour. The dying woman told her friends how the moorings of their steamer had broken as they lay in the river waiting for a chance to come up to the quay. The breaking had saved them from collision with another ship. "I asked what had happened?" She

said : " Someone told me the moorings had broken and saved us." I said, " No, a Hand cut them." Then after a moment's silence, she added : " That same Hand is cutting my moorings, and I am going forth."

Elsie Inglis had not wished to cut the cables which bound her to her work. As she realised the end was near, she said : " For a long time I meant to live, but now I know I am going. It is so good to think of beginning new work over there, but I would have liked to have finished one or two things here first." That was just the key to her whole life. She had always longed to serve. The service offered to her own country in 1914 had been refused. That offered for Mesopotamia in 1916 was again refused with contumely. So she went to Serbia, and there again and again wrote to the Serbian headquarters : " Tell me where your need is greatest, without respect to difficulties, and we will do our best to help Serbia and her brave soldiers." So she stayed with her hospital after days under fire, until the final surrender to overwhelming force. Then imprisonment, contrary to all laws of war, with the Union Jack—too precious to be handed over to the enemy—wrapped round her body, under her dress. Release came at last, and the flag could be waved in triumph from the carriage window when the train crossed the Swiss frontier. Then came the work in Roumania. Again defeat, again hurried retreat, with every form of hardship. After a short stay in Russia, it became clear nothing further could be hoped from that unhappy country, and Dr. Inglis, worn out with three years of incessant work, faced the fatigues of the journey home from Archangel, through the Arctic Circle in winter, to Newcastle-on-Tyne. It was too much, even for her, and the end came.

It is not given to many before death to perceive the new tasks awaiting them, but the doctor was able to talk confidently of the new work which she was about to undertake. With her the vision was clear, and she several times pronounced it wonderful. The hopes and beliefs of those who can hope and believe seem substantiated in these lively utterances of one who was severely truthful by nature. Recognition was given in no grudging measure after death had crowned her labours. The Queen sent a letter, the Chief of the Scottish Command was present at the funeral in St. Giles, the Bishop of Oxford and dignitaries of the Scottish Church conducted a memorial service in St. Margaret's, Westminster. But here we want to dwell most on the noble thought that filled her mind as the end drew near. For it is not the fact of physical death which strikes cold to the heart of so many eager strivers after right. It is the thought of work left undone, and of a possible eternity in which there will be nothing to do. We all know the dear old woman to whom the bliss of Heaven consisted in the prospect of " nothing to do for ever and for ever." It was well for her to rest her tired old limbs as she waited for that eternity of calm, but this is not the desire of such as Elsie Inglis. Death would have been terrible to her had it meant cessation of work ; but it was not so. And surely this view is in harmony with the deepest teachings of Unitarianism. Other faiths may hold that " Jesus did it, did it all, long, long ago." But Unitarians look differently upon life and death. We are here as co-workers with God in that redemption which was not completed two thousand years ago on Calvary. We believe our work will not be ended with this life ; we shall pass on to another task, and perhaps to others beyond that. The vision which shone before the dying eyes of Elsie Inglis was not an eternity of idleness, but ever widening spheres of labour, with ever growing powers, and an ever increasing knowledge. It is as the poet wrote :—

" We shall rest . . . and sleep for an æon or two,
Till the Master of all good workmen shall set us to work anew.

. . . . . .

And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,
But each for the joy of the working, and each in his separate star,
Shall do the work as he sees it for the God of things as they are." DORA MELLONE.

SAVING HUMAN LIFE. (II.)

AN APPEAL TO THE CHURCHES FOR HELP.

BY DR. JOHN CAMPBELL.

The death rate has been dwelt upon because it is sufficiently impressive to make us pause and consider what it means. There is, however, another and a not less serious aspect of the question of our duty to our neighbour which the Public Health officials cannot tabulate or report upon. It is the amount of chronic or permanent ill-health and incapacity which these diseases bring to many who escape from death. The damage to the individual and to the community is incalculable. Were it calculable it would be seen to be appalling.

The gist of the argument is this: Laws in regard to Public Health and Sanitation, Notification of Disease, Medical Supervision of the Health of the Community, and the efforts of individual medical men are not enough. We need the help of the Churches; we need the influence of the teachers of religion to impress upon the people the primary duties of citizenship.

While the Churches could do a great deal to help in the fight against the spread of Infectious Diseases, they can be of no less assistance in the combat against those affections which are popularly known as Contagious Diseases. Indeed the very existence of these affections is so much a moral question that the influence of the Churches is an absolute necessity in the struggle against them. It is hardly too much to say that the Churches have been neglectful in this matter. They have allowed public opinion and State intervention to lead them in a domain in which they should have been the leaders. Into the causes of this unworthy position of the Churches it is unnecessary to go. Our present concern is to ask their help, and to be grateful for any assistance they can give us. It is said that "one sows and another reaps." The statement is pre-eminently true of the contagious diseases. Men "sow wild oats" and others reap an undesirable crop. Were the sowers alone affected the trouble would be bad enough, but in this case we have to consider also the woful position of the gleaners. The women and children come in for a great and wholly undeserved share of the suffering. A man who contracts a disease of this kind in early life has very often to face years of impaired health, ending in premature death. Nor is this the worst which may befal him. Affections of the nervous system may show themselves in middle life and may render existence a misery for years, or may destroy his mental powers and leave him the inmate of a lunatic asylum. Too frequently his ailing wife passes from doctor to doctor seeking relief, which can only be partially afforded her. The children too suffer cruelly. Sometimes they come into the world marred by deformities due to defective development. More often they are the victims of vague ill-health or of mental aberration, which unfits them for the full duties of citizenship. Nor does the process of degeneration always stop with the first generation. Sometimes the tainted blood will leave its traces even in the third and fourth generation in the form of low general vitality or defects of mind. The human race suffers incalculable damage, physical and mental, from the existence of these diseases. Medical treatment, with or without the aid and authority of the State, may mitigate their baneful effects, but cannot stamp them out. Their eradication belongs to a province over which the Churches have control. Here is a mission field second to none in importance lying at our very doors. Surely the Churches will rise to the occasion and join in the endeavour to drive these fell diseases from our midst.

The question of the destruction of life before birth is a very serious one. The law regards it as a criminal act, and, when it can, severely punishes those who are concerned in it. But this goes a very short way towards checking the evil. Its existence is a proof of the low moral tone of the community. It can only be got rid of by the cultivation of a higher conception of the sacredness of the life

of the unborn child. This is essentially a duty of the Churches. The whole matter is so much within their control that we must look to them for effective help.

The customs of the age have such an important bearing upon the saving of human life that we cannot ignore them. The freedom from parental control, which is such a marked feature of present-day existence, has too frequently deplorable consequences. The necessity which compels the young and innocent to leave home and follow some occupation in a large town, where they are isolated from the restrictions of domestic surroundings, is too often fraught with danger. If you take one of our daily papers and follow the number of inquests on children found dead or dying under suspicious circumstances, you will probably be surprised at the number of unwanted infants which perish annually from deliberate neglect or worse. Moreover, it is safe to say that those cases which are thus brought to the public ken are but a portion of the whole of the annual "massacre of the innocents." The devilish cunning with which the traffic is carried on, in probably the majority of cases, eludes detection. Here we have a problem which demands our deepest thought, and which, perhaps, calls for a revolution in our present ideas. Hitherto the Churches have apparently ignored the existence of these children. Philanthropic efforts have been made, though made on an inadequate scale, to care for them, but there is no evidence that any Church has made any organised effort to save and succour, to rear and educate, the unwanted children of its members. This field for beneficent work is as yet untilled. These babies are, for the most part, left to the care of the State, and she can offer them only the protection of a harsh and unfeeling stepmother.

In a meeting like this, time does not permit of anything but a brief survey of the situation, but even a cursory review is sufficient to show that a "religion which is three parts conduct" will greatly lessen the sum total of disease and death. Thus the New Reformation, with its greater emphasis on conduct, will be, when it comes, a powerful means of saving human life.

LESSON NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

To be used in accordance with the Scheme of Biblical Instruction prepared by the S. S. Committee of the N.S.P.C.I. for 1918.

6th January. The Christians in Jerusalem. 1. *Choosing the Twelfth Apostle.* Read Acts i. 12-17, 21-26. Key Text, Luke vi. 13.

Introduction. Jesus' cruel and shameful death was a great blow to the disciples. For they had loved him as their friend, leader, and Lord, and, moreover, had fervently hoped that his journey to Jerusalem would result in the establishment of a new kingdom, in which they would be rulers with Christ as king. But, although disappointed in this, they became convinced that Jesus was risen from the dead, and they drew together again at Jerusalem, according to Jesus' command, to receive the help which he said God would give them. Although they scarcely realized it, this was to mark the foundation of the new kingdom—a spiritual kingdom of loving hearts, with the risen Christ as the King, invisible, but potent to save. The disciples were to receive a new authority. Up to this time they had been disciples (learners); henceforth they were to fulfil the office of apostles (teachers or messengers) which Jesus had bestowed on them (see Key Text).

Points 1. *The beginning of the Christian Church.* This is a most appropriate lesson for the New Year, for it should inspire us with determination to carry out our good resolutions, no matter how big the task may seem. The complete total of those who remained loyal to Jesus was only about 120; yet within a few generations there were millions, and to-day hundreds of millions call themselves after the crucified carpenter of Nazareth. Don't despise small beginnings. Read the story of the cloud in I. Kings xviii. 42-45; also

the story of William Lloyd Garrison. Just as the twelve undertook to win the world for Christ, so did twelve men gather in a small room to start a campaign to free the slaves in America, which was actually successful in a few short years, although at first almost everybody was opposed to freeing the slaves.

(2) *"A Sabbath Day's journey,"* about ¾ of a mile. No good Jew would travel further on the Sabbath Day.

(3) *Choosing the twelfth disciple.* The Lord had appointed them twelve, and therefore they wished to find another to take the place of the dead traitor, Judas. They employed the method of casting lots, because in those days men felt that what they called chance was more truly the work of God than ordinary choice. We, however, believe that God works more truly through our choice and reason than by luck. Notice that they did not leave it entirely to chance; they first chose out the two best men they knew.

January 13th. 2. *Jesus' promise is fulfilled.* Read Acts ii. (especially verses 1-4, 27-37). Key Text, Luke iv. 18.

Points 1. *The Holy Spirit.* There is some difficulty in this story as to the meaning of the gift of the Holy Spirit. From St. Paul, and especially from Luke iv. 16-20, we gather that it meant the bestowal of a new and wonderful power for good. But, as the gift often came in a very sudden way, those who received it would feel it like a mighty rushing wind which overthrew all their old weaknesses, and, in its first manifestation, gave them a wonderful power of speech so spiritual, so varied, and so ecstatic as to be very hard to understand. This was called "speaking with tongues," and when interpreted in ordinary words if often resulted in teaching of great moral importance. It was this gift that the apostles now received. They felt that Christ was a living spirit in their hearts, and would enable them to go forth and do his work.

2. *"Tongues of fire."* This is a picturesque description of the inward fact that the spirit inflamed them with new zeal and power.

3. *The foreign languages.* We need not suppose that the apostles spoke all sorts of foreign languages. [*For Elder Scholars.* The statement to this effect is no doubt due to the ignorance of the writer of the real meaning of "speaking with tongues." He apparently thought it meant "speaking with foreign tongues," when, as we have seen, it means excited and wonderful utterance.] They spoke the language of hope, love, and salvation which all can understand, even though they may not understand the words. A shake of the hand will often say more than many words. Thus, even the birds and beasts could understand the loving language of St. Francis.

4. *The enthusiasm of Peter and his companions.* They are accused of being drunk. Peter retorts, "It is but the third hour of the day" (9 a.m.), and no Jew would ever drink before 9 a.m., the time of morning prayer. Their enthusiasm was due to their being filled with the desire to help everybody. They found helping a really jolly business, *e.g.*, the story of the elves and the shoemaker. These elves so enjoyed doing their work that they used to dance about for joy. When we can feel like that about our duties, we shall indeed have received the Holy Spirit.

5. *Peter Preaches Repentance and Baptism.* Repentance must be felt. We must feel sorry for our faults as the first step to reform (*e.g.*, Story of Prodigal Son). Baptism is a beautiful sign that as water washes away dirt, so God washes away sin when we repent. [*For Elder Scholars.* Paul gives a deeper meaning to Baptism. The sinking into and the emergence from the water is our promise to suffer, and, if needs be, die with Christ, so that we may rise with him. The custom of immersing the whole body is now only to be found in some Baptist Churches, where *adult*, and not *infant*, baptism is the rule. We regard infant baptism as the expression of the parents' hope and purpose to bring up the child a true Christian.]

6. *The* 3,000 *converted* lived for the most part together, sharing each other's wealth or poverty, as a way of expres-

sing their brotherly love for one another.

January 20th. 3. *Healing Power.* Read Acts iii. 1-11. *Key Text,* Acts iii. 6.

Introduction. The Holy Spirit showed itself in Jesus, not only in his teaching, but by his healing. It could not be otherwise. One cannot sincerely preach of Heaven without trying also to make the world heavenly by doing good. It was so with the apostles also. They, too, went about doing, as well as preaching, good. We have to be on our guard against regarding these works of healing as too miraculous to have happened. Many diseases, especially muscular and nervous ones (which in the New Testament are usually described as the work of devils or demons), can be cured by the power of spiritual personality. [*For elder scholars.* Refer to the great amount of what is known as faith-healing or psychic healing which is carried on to-day. Within proper limits, much can be done in this way]. Moreover, all sickness is cured more readily where there is loving sympathy (*e.g.*, Florence Nightingale).

Points 1. *The beggar at the gate Beautiful.* It was the custom for the poor and helpless to sit at this gate, because the worshippers were likely to show their sincerity in going to pray by giving them alms.

2. *The Key Text.* So many people think money is everything. But what a mistake! Here were two men, without money, but richer far than many who had: they had loving hearts, they stretched out helpful hands. See the parable of the Good Samaritan, whose goodness consisted in doing just what was necessary. To show we love God and are loyal to Jesus, we have to do *something.* What we have we must give. Read Hans Andersen's story, "Something."

3. *The miracle was God's doing.* Peter knew that nothing good can be done by man alone; he did not give himself airs for what he had done, but humbly insisted that it was the work of God. When men believe in God as firmly as the apostles did, they are able to do mighty and noble works. David conquered Goliath because he trusted in God. We also have giants to fight—suffering, selfishness, temper, etc., and if we trust in God we shall overcome them, because God will be with us.

4. *Verse* 19. *A beautiful thought.* Like rain after drought, so love after hate and fear.

January 27. 4. *Conflict with the rulers.* Read Acts iv. 1-22. *Key Text,* Acts iv. 11.

Points 1. *The Sadducees and the Resurrection.* It was the priests and rulers who had put Jesus to death, and many of them were Sadducees. The Sadducees held that neither Jesus nor anyone else could live after death, and therefore when Peter boldly proclaimed that Jesus was alive they felt angry and alarmed. The Sadducees were very worldly-minded folk, who cared only for worldly success, and measured all things, even heavenly things, in a worldly way. Thus, they thought to pose Jesus by means of the problem of the woman who had successively married seven brothers as each one died. "Whose wife will she be in Heaven?" they asked. Jesus showed them that their mistake was in thinking of Heaven as if it were just like earth. "There will be no marryings in Heaven," he said, but a more spiritual relationship. Had they not been so worldly-minded they would have seen that man's goodness is different from his body. The good never dies.

2. *Persecution helps on the Gospel.* The very day Peter and John were arrested, there were over 5,000 converts. There is nothing so foolish (as well as wicked) as persecuting those you don't like. It only makes folk think more of them and less of you.

3. *Peter and John go quietly to prison.* Loving God, they did not fear men. Illustrate by stories of martyrs and heroes, *e.g.*, Ridley and Latimer—"We are this day lighting a candle in England that shall never be put out." The truly good man cares only for his cause, and therefore, even when he appears to be defeated, he triumphs, because his very courage reveals to folk the grandeur of his cause. Had the priests and rulers been good men, they would have seen that the apostles

were doing what they professed to stand for—the work of God. But their aim was to be first, and therefore they were envious of the apostles' success. If we all tried to work for God we should not quarrel, but each would do his part, as *e.g.*, in a battle or a football match—we should work for our side, and not for ourselves. Who is on the Lord's side?

4. *The triumph of the rejected stone.* Jesus had conquered. His enemies thought that they had won by putting him to death; but he arose a million times more powerful as the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. Jesus the carpenter was greater than the rulers. None is too humble to do good and great work if his aim is generous and not selfish, *e.g.*, story of captive little maid of Israel (II. Kings v. 19). She was the humblest person in Naaman's house, yet she was the means of saving him, because she was loving and tender.

5. *They had been with Jesus* (*verse* 13) That made all the difference.

6. *Peter's courage.* The rulers were afraid of the people, so they let the apostles go, forbidding them to continue their preaching. Peter said that this could make no difference. God was working in them, and in loyalty to him they would proclaim the power of God. E. H. P.

POEMS: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL.

By G. F. SAVAGE-ARMSTRONG,
The Poet of Wicklow and Down.

This selection has been issued by Mr. S. Shannon Millin with the dual purpose of making known the work of this poet, who is far too little read considering his genuine poetic abilities, and of raising money for the endowment of a bed in the Irish Counties War Hospital. The bed is to be called "The Savage-Armstrong Bed," in memory of the poet's elder son, Colonel Savage-Armstrong, D.S.O., who, after a brave and distinguished military career, fell early in the year, at the age of thirty-nine, whilst fighting gallantly in France. All the profits on the book are to be used for this memorial. But, since in times of common suffering like these, the broadest and most generous spirit should be the inspiration of all, the dedication of the book is not limited to Colonel Savage-Armstrong, but includes Major William Redmond, M.P., and "all other brave Irishmen."

This all-embracing dedication is quite in keeping with the spirit of the poems, for Savage-Armstrong was the poet of Down and Wicklow, of North and South. His love for these two counties is well expressed in the poem, "Down and Wicklow."

"I love the fresh, bright autumn days,
Of mottled skies and lucid weather;
For then from Wicklow's fraughan-braes
I hail Slieve Donard's heights of heather.
Far off I trace, in outline clear,
The peaks of Down in light extended—
Twin spots of earth I hold most dear
In one ethereal realm are blended."

His inspiration is the same in writing of either of these "twin spots of earth." His poetry is a welcome change from those utterances, at present far too frequent, which tend to lay all the stress on differences rather than on the unity of which they are the necessary components. Ireland was not North and South to him; it was Ireland—"our Island Home," the thought of whose beauties, and the love of whose children, move him to cry in "A Sunset off Killyleagh":—

"O Peace, O Love, from heaven afar,
'Mid roseate tints of East and West;
Come, soft as ray of evening star—
Come, fold our Isle in endless rest!
No more let heart from heart be torn
By narrow spite and blinding hate;
No more the exile weep forlorn,
His lightless hearth left desolate."

This unifying spirit makes the present volume more than a memorial; it is a peace-offering, reminding all Irishmen of their common birthright, and inspiring them with the same high ideals.

A remarkable thing about the poems selected is that they are just as appropriate to present conditions as if they were written only yesterday instead of many years ago in the remote pre-war days. Yet, after all, it is the nature of the poetic genius to seize on

the eternal value of all the events and feelings it touches. Thus the poet might have had the problem of Belgium in his mind when he wrote in "De Verdun of Darragh" the following words, for they are most appropriate to our own feelings :—

"'Why should you fight for the land of a stranger?'
Quoth Lovel, my neighbour, last night,
Lifting his claret—'this courting of danger,
Friend, is it sober and right'?

"True, but I hold that to fight for the right
Always uplifts us the nearer to God,
Seeing the summits of virtue in sight,
Shall we not perish who leave them untrod?"

and what he says in his poem "France, 1871," is felt with even greater force to-day.

Without exaggeration one can describe Savage-Armstrong as a genuine poet. He does not, perhaps, dazzle with his brilliance, but there is a glow of authentic poetic feeling in almost everything he wrote. At his best, undoubtedly, when writing about the natural beauties of the country he loved so well—and every Irishman who is at all susceptible to the charm of nature will read his poems with pleasure—he has accomplished other fine poetic work, of which the last poem in the selection, "Time, the Healer," is a fine example. In this he combats the common delusion that "time alone can heal the desolate heart," on the ground that it is unworthy of man to allow time to wither up the sap of affection, instead of employing sorrow and bereavement as the proper nutriment for a stronger and purer growth. He concludes :—

"Thank heaven, I say, when some poor flower or book,
Some gift, some relic of the buried dead,
Suddenly flashes from its hiding-nook,
Whirls the cold Present back as leaves are shed.
Draws all the Past around us like the air,
And the lost faces lean to us; and love,
Remorse for rough deeds done, pity, despair,
Stern griefs convulsive the hurt bosom move,
And tears their bitter tyranny renew,
Proving man's heart, through all man's weakness, true."

The volume contains an appreciative foreword by the Lord Chief Justice, and a helpful and well-informed introduction by Mr. S. Shannon Millin. On the production of the book Mr. Millin is to be heartily congratulated. It is tastefully bound, the paper is of excellent quality, and the half-tone and line blocks are of first-rate workmanship. The illustrations consist of views of Down and Wicklow and photographs of the poet himself, Colonel Savage-Armstrong, Major William Redmond, and the Irish Counties War Hospital, Marlborough Hall, Dublin. But the chief artistic gem is the Celtic border of the dedication page, which is the work of our old friend, Mr. John Vinycomb, M.R.I.A. An Irish Round Tower and the beautiful Cross of St. Columba have been introduced into the design, whilst within the border at the head is an ingenious arrangement of the arms of the four provinces in quatrefoil, as indicating the all-embracing character of the dedication.

The volume can be heartily recommended. The price (5/-) is not high when one takes into consideration the quality of the production and the beneficent purpose to which all profits are devoted.

E. H. P.

"Poems: National and International," by G. F. Savage-Armstrong, M.A., D.Litt. Foreword by the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. Introduction by S. Shannon Millin, B.A., B.L. Ponsonby. 5/- net.

Report.

Holywood.—The Annual Meeting and Congregational Soiree was held on Thursday evening, November 29th. After tea had been served, Dr. Greenfield presided over a very well attended meeting. The business was first disposed of. The adoption of the Committee's report and statement of accounts was carried on the motion of the chairman, seconded by Mr. W. H. Niall Nelson, and the following new members were elected to the Committee :—Miss Malcolm, Messrs. Gawn Grainger, C. J. M'Kisack, and R. F. Patterson. Mr. W. Graham was reappointed Governor of the Sullivan Schools, and a vote of thanks was

passed to the members of the choir for their services during the year. At the conclusion of the business a most enjoyable entertainment was proceeded with, in the course of which the following took part :—Miss Mabel Harvey (pianoforte solo), Miss Hill (songs), Mr. James M'Kisack (songs), Mr. James Shannon (songs), and a large number of the young people, under the direction of Misses May and Norah Patterson, provided an amusing and well-acted sketch.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

Owing to the greatly increased charge for paper, the cost of producing this Magazine will be greatly increased during the year 1918. In order to meet such increased cost the Editorial Board is reluctantly compelled to increase the price of the Magazine to 1½d. We hope that this will not affect our circulation, and earnestly appeal for the continued support of our subscribers, assuring them that when possible the old price will be restored.

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